



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

**NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR**

**Speech by the President of the Republic of Slovenia,  
Nataša Pirc Musar,  
at the main event in support of Ukraine  
and in sympathy with its people on the anniversary of the start of the war**

Presidential Palace, 23 February 2023

**The spoken word prevails.**

*Dear Ambassador of Ukraine to Slovenia,  
Honourable President of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia,  
Distinguished guests,  
Distinguished diplomatic corps,  
Dear Everyone who had to leave their homes in Ukraine involuntarily,*

*Allow me, on this sad anniversary of the beginning of the aggression against Ukraine, to speak to you about this international, social and human tragedy, as President and as Nataša, who has lived her life with values related to human rights, and as a mother who cares about the present and the future of her child.*

*I have been at the Presidential Palace for just under two months and in that short time I have already experienced a lot – more than I had dared to imagine. But I have been experiencing the fate, the plight of the young people around me, their parents, their relatives, for much longer, especially since the pandemic broke out, when our homes became prisons for two years, and children and teenagers in their prime years were deprived of the basic things that shape their personalities: companionship and love,*

*as well as everything that comes with education; not only at school, but also through the very everyday experiences of life.*

*The war in Ukraine has been added to the pandemic's serious consequences. A war that was not provoked. A war that no good person wanted. A war that does not interfere in the lives of young people simply by confining them to their rooms. War drives them from their homes. War takes their lives. Their parents' lives. Their friends' lives. Their relatives' lives. It denies them their dreams, it denies them a vision for themselves and their loved ones.*

*The war in Ukraine, which began a year ago, is not their war. It is not a war that you wanted or started. It is a war that individuals, led by Putin and his regime, wanted, convinced that they were defending the interests of their country. But they did not ask their own people what those interests actually are, what it is that threatens the existence of Russia and its interests. They were not able to show which country had attacked Russia with weapons and threatened its existence. But they put guns in the hands of Russian boys, dressed them up in aggressor uniforms and plunged too many of them to certain death.*

*The vast majority of those who are attacking in the name of the Russian aggressor regime, and of those in Ukraine who are defending themselves against the aggressor, are young people. What would these people be in 10, 15 years' time if it had not been for this war? Outstanding athletes? Engineers? Doctors? Craftspersons, who are so lacking in Europe? Would a boy from Ukraine and a girl from Russia fall in love, start a family? We will never know. But we do know how much these young people have to give to themselves, to their families and to society, if only they are given the opportunity. We know, and we will find out today, because we will all have the honour and the opportunity to hear musicians from Ukraine who were driven from their homeland by the war and decided to continue their training here.*

*The musicians of the humanitarian and artistic project Music for the Future are not only ambassadors of their country. They are a reminder of our fundamental misunderstanding of war: that war is above all a defeat of human society and civilisation. It is an expression of the inability to resolve conflicts peacefully, which is one of the fundamental principles of modern international law and international*

*relations. In this war, the peaceful settlement of conflicts has not even been given a chance.*

*Not only as a mother who cares about the present and future of her only son, and as someone who cares about the fate of the innocent, but also as a politician who demands that this war be stopped and that Ukraine be given what the Charter of the United Nations, of which the Russian Federation is an influential member, allows it: sovereignty and thus the ability to decide its own future. The aim must be to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.*

*"Today, the fate of humanity is more crucially linked than ever. The boundaries between the problems of "others" and "our" problems are increasingly blurred."*

*This is not my thought, it is not a thought written in the past days, weeks or months, but it is very timely and very true. It was spoken approximately two decades ago by Dr Janez Drnovšek, who passed away 15 years ago today. In the light of current events, I wish that as many statesmen and stateswomen of his stature as possible could be in the highest political offices around the world in these challenging times.*

*To Drnovšek's thought, let me add this: Our destinies remain linked, Slovenia remains committed to Ukraine.*

*Thank you all for coming. Thank you to all the ambassadors who are here today and thank you to all the countries you represent that are helping Ukraine in these difficult times.*

*I myself have just returned from the accommodation centre in Postojna, where I visited all those who have fled from Ukraine to Slovenia. Hearing their stories makes us realise how right it is to help people in need. Slovenia has done a lot for these people. And it will continue to do so. Thank you to all the non-governmental organisations and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia that are doing their best to help them.*

*I spoke to children from Ukraine aged between 5 and 12. Today they do not have a smile on their mouths. We all cried together before I said goodbye. I said to them: today, on this terrible anniversary, we can all cry together. But tomorrow should be a day for laughter and joy again for these children.*

*Thank you all together and please remember this.*

*Where are the children and civilians dying? Where are the people without food and electricity? Where are homes destroyed?*

*Not in Russia. In Ukraine.*

*Thank you.*